



# Michigan Central Station

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*Transformation of an Icon*

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

**QUINN  
EVANS**





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## ABOUT QUINN EVANS

Since our founding in 1984, Quinn Evans has championed the revitalization of community places. Today at over 200 strong we are one of the largest women-owned and woman-led architecture firms in the country. We are the recipient of the American Institute of Architects’ 2024 Architecture Firm Award, an accolade that underscores the quality of our design and our impact on communities. Our innovative solutions evolve from diverse expertise in architecture, preservation planning and design, interior design, and landscape architecture.

Quinn Evans specializes in cultural, institutional, commercial, and educational projects, including museums, historic parks, theaters, mixed-use buildings, government buildings, schools and campus facilities, libraries, and major civic landmarks and infrastructure.

Since 2018, we have been working closely with Michigan Central and Ford Motor Company on the iconic Michigan Central Station. We led a multidisciplinary team of architects, engineers, historians, and conservation specialists to rehabilitate the monumental structure. The renewed Station houses a dynamic mix of cutting-edge office, retail, and public space. The adaptive reuse of the historic station connects Detroit’s pioneering past to a promising future.



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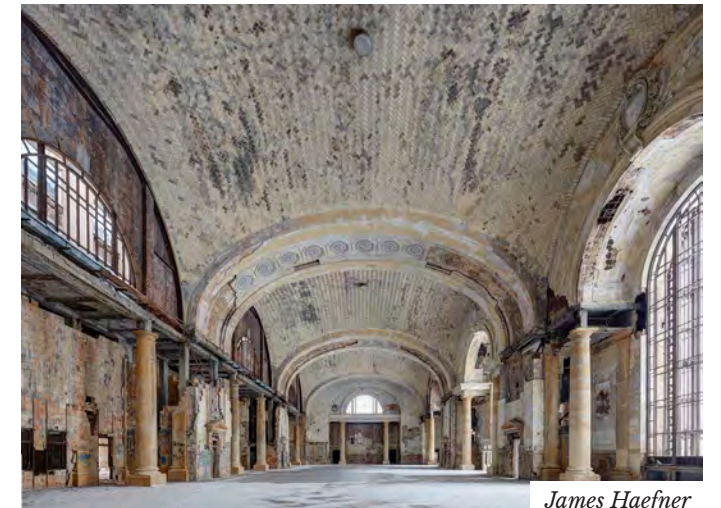


*Detroit Public Library*

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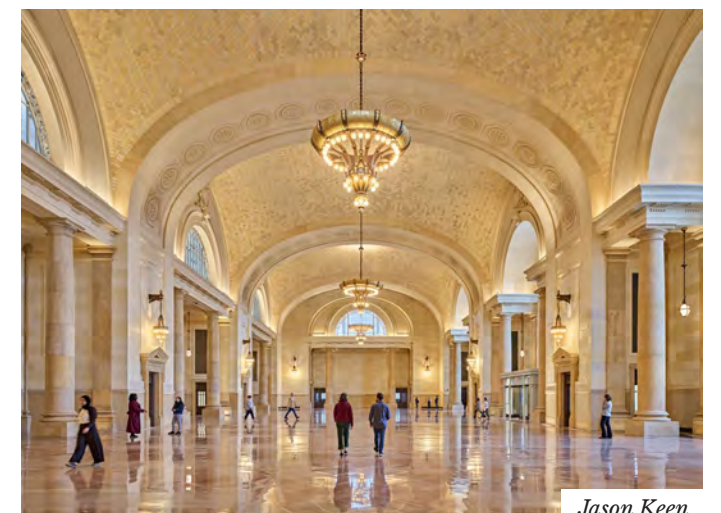


*James Haefner*

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*Jason Keen*







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# 01 Detroit's Crown Jewel



## BACKGROUND

Once a symbol of decay looming over Detroit, Michigan Central Station has been transformed into a hub for innovation and economic growth.

One of the nation's most acclaimed Beaux-Arts train stations, Michigan Central Station was designed by the architectural team of Warren & Wetmore and Reed & Stern—the team that was also responsible for Grand Central Station in New York. The building opened in 1913 with a grand concourse, waiting area, offices, restaurants, and retail. Its size and material richness signified Detroit's prosperity to arriving passengers.

By 1940, the building accommodated more than 4,000 passengers daily. Michigan Central Station was a major transportation hub for soldiers leaving for and returning from fighting in the World Wars, as well as for people arriving from the southern US as part of the Great Migration. Thousands also worked in the offices in the tower, though it was never fully finished or occupied.

Michigan Central Station was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. In 1988, with the decline of rail travel, the last train left the station. For more than 30 years, the building remained vacant.

Many of its decorative elements were removed and the building was heavily damaged by continued exposure to the elements. In 2009, the Detroit City Council voted to demolish the building, but preservationists in the community prevailed and the building was saved.

Quinn Evans first began work to assess the condition of Michigan Central Station in 2010, while the building was still under its previous ownership. That initial effort, combined with subsequent steps over the following years to help stabilize and protect the vacant structure, enabled us to readily assist Ford in formulating its ambitious, multi-phase plan to restore the building.

Ford purchased the building in 2018 with a vision to create a technology hub with a restored Michigan Central Station as its anchor building. Ford selected Quinn Evans to lead the design of the restoration, with the team of Christman-Brinker overseeing construction. This important civic landmark has now reopened to the public. Today, Michigan Central Station stands proudly as a model of perseverance and responsible stewardship, reflecting the immeasurable value of historic preservation.



POSTCARD, 1913  
*Detroit Historical Society*



TROOPS RETURNING FROM WW1, 1919  
*The Detroit News*



MAIN ENTRANCE, 1972  
*Detroit Free Press Archives*





*Detroit Public Library*



*Keith Jolly*



*Keith Jolly*



**WAITING ROOM**  
*Detroit Public Library*









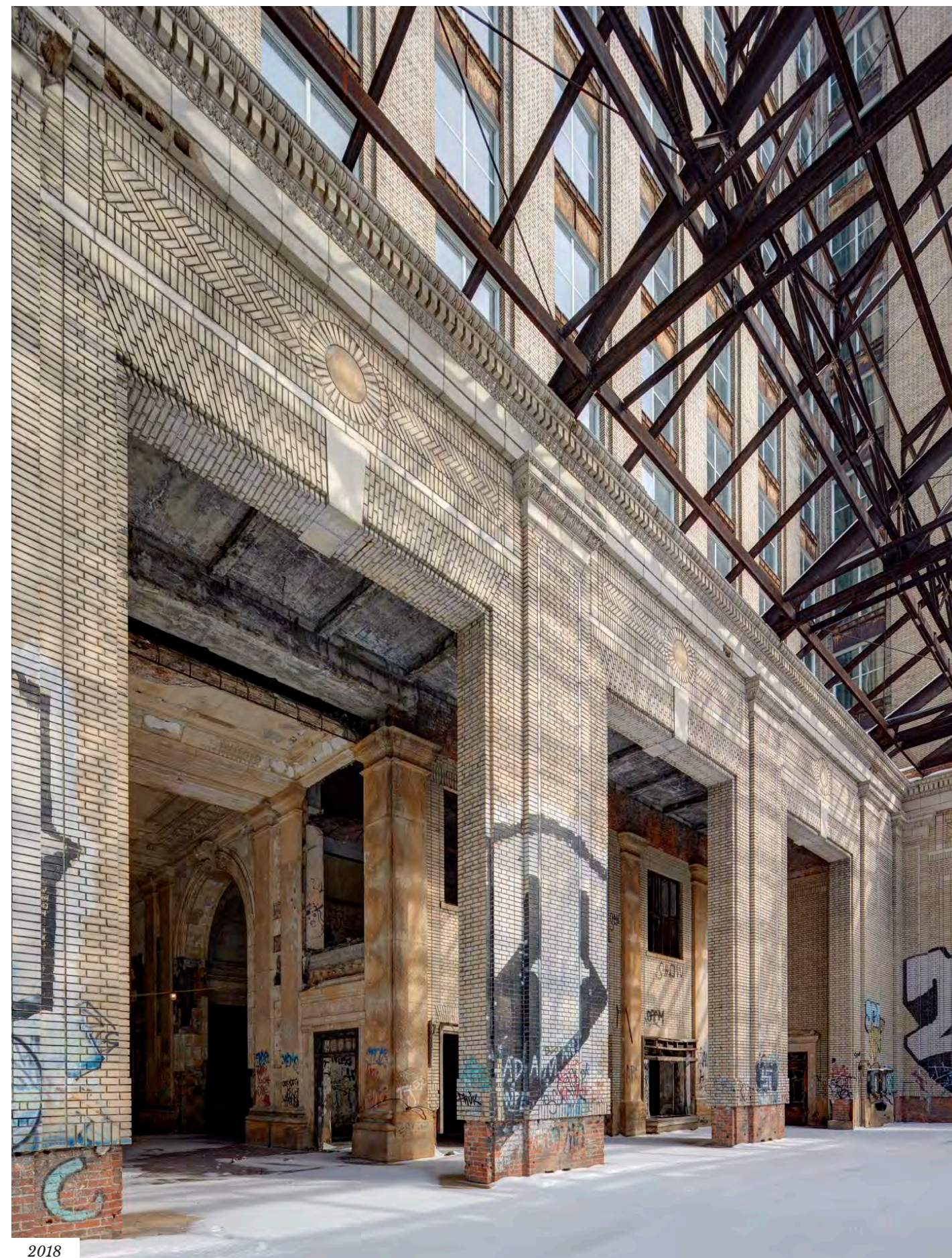
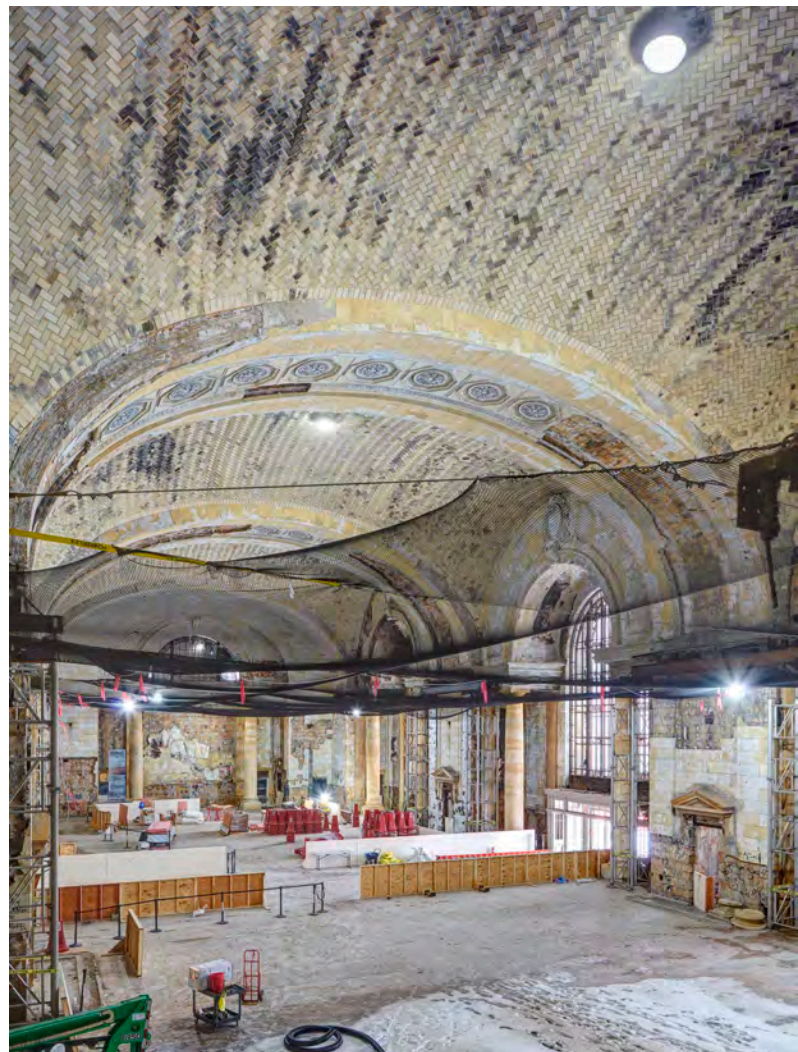
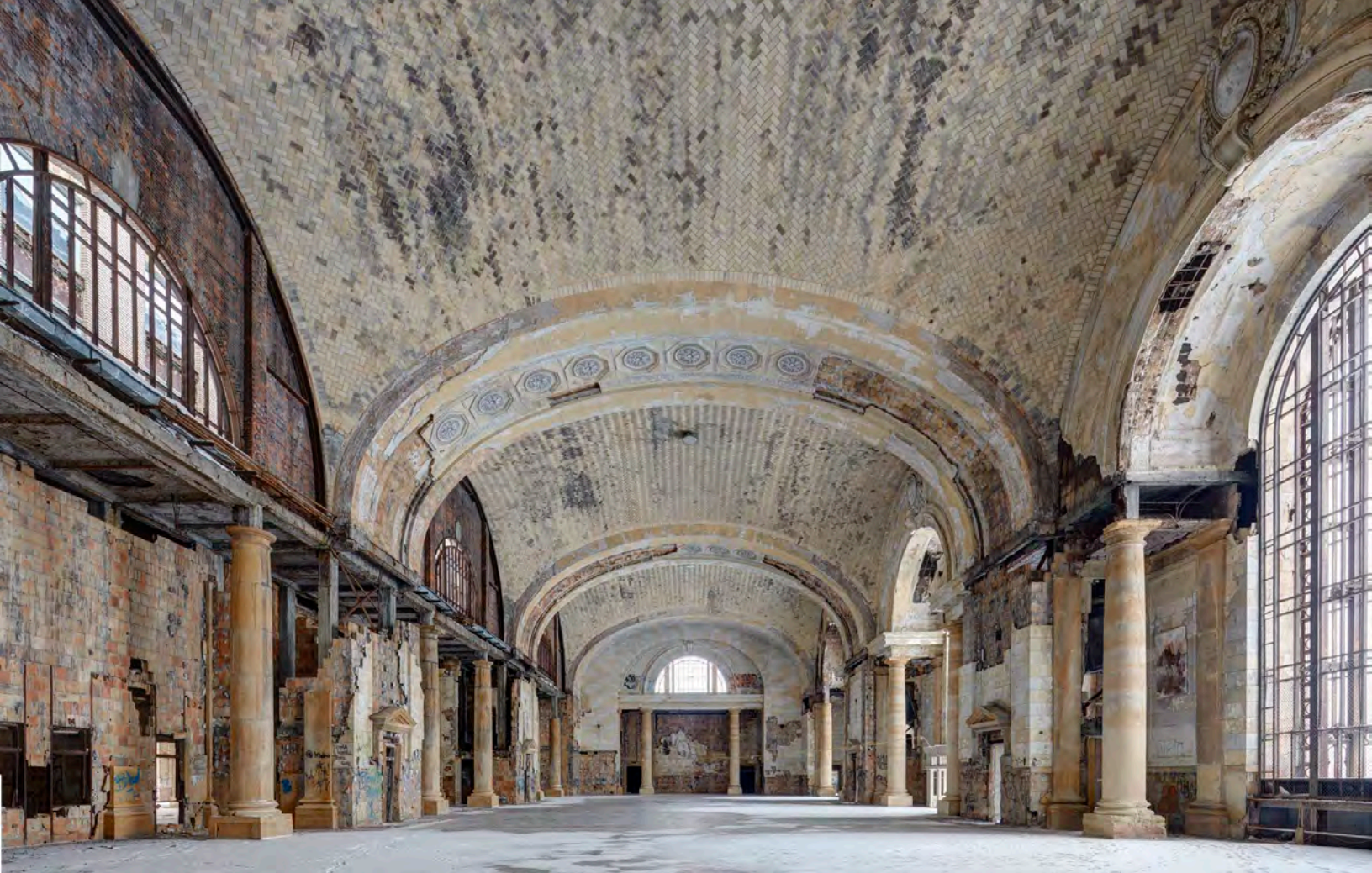
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# 02 A Diamond in the Rough



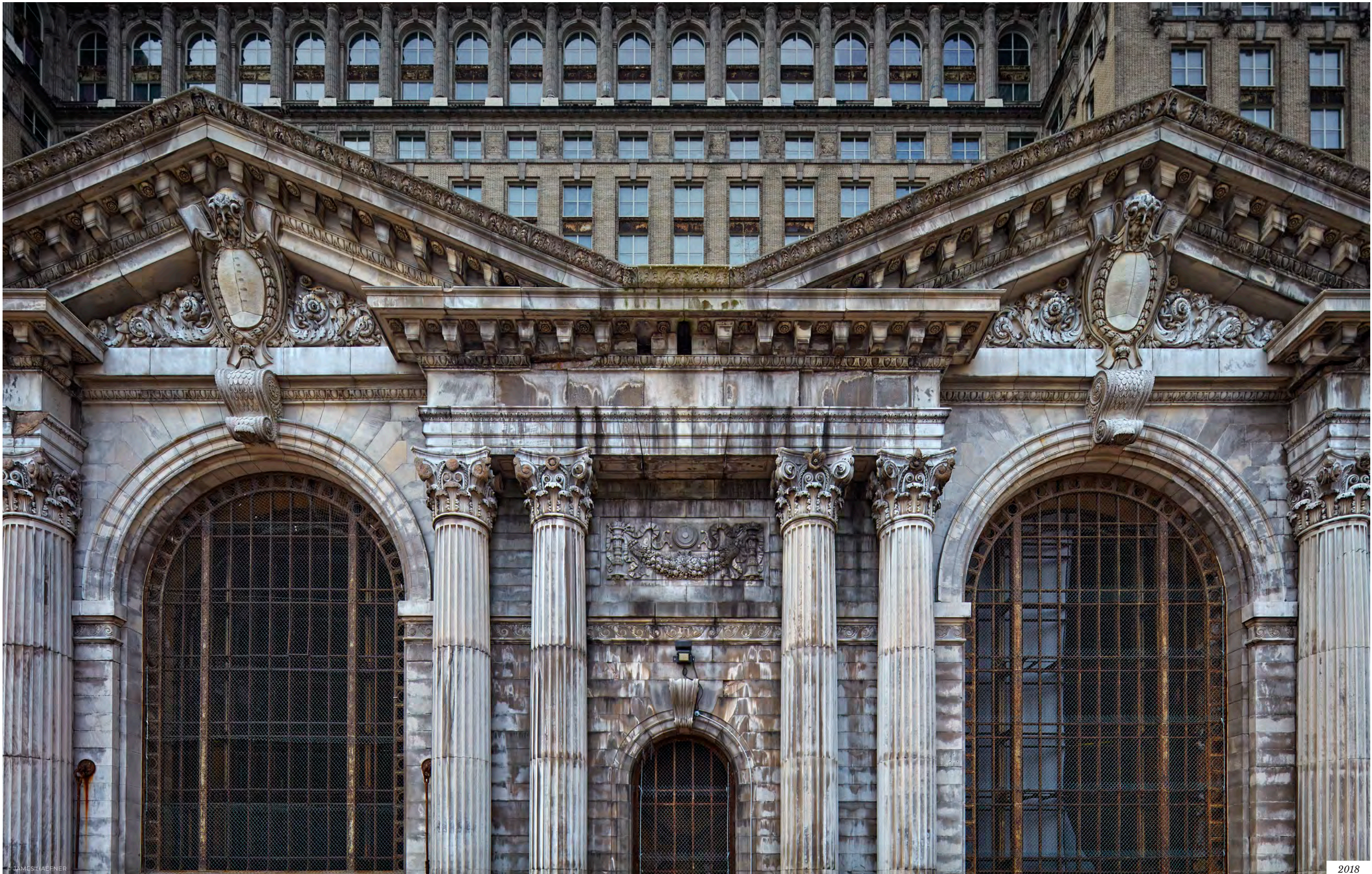






2018







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## 03 Polishing a Gem



## EXTERIOR

Michigan Central Station is a symbol of Detroit's vibrant industrial age. Approaching the building's entrance on the north side, you will see a Beaux-Arts station that looks very much as it did when it opened in 1913.

### *Approaching the Building:*

- **Façade:** The base of the building is clad in textured limestone. Where stone was missing or too badly damaged from years of water infiltration, replacement stone was sourced from the original quarry in Indiana from blocks extracted at the time the station was originally built.
- **Pediments:** Three pediments along the north façade and entry plaza feature mythological creatures.
- **Columns and Capitals:** Along the grand hall façade, to the north stand 40-foot-high stone columns with ornamental capitals at the top. Nine of the capitals are original to the building, while five were replicated to match the originals. A master stone carver spent more than 400 hours hand carving one new stone capital, which was then scanned and used as a model for CNC machines to replicate the last four capitals. In time, these new capitals will age to match the gray tone of the existing limestone.
- **Entry Canopy:** Using historic drawings, Quinn Evans recreated the missing entry canopy. The new canopy appears much as it did when the building first opened, but now includes a skylight that gives glimpses to the monumental window and stonework above.
- **Office Tower:** A brick and terracotta-clad tower rises 18 stories above the ground floor. All the terracotta detailing, from the Juliet balconies to the top cornice marked with double corbels, has been completely restored.



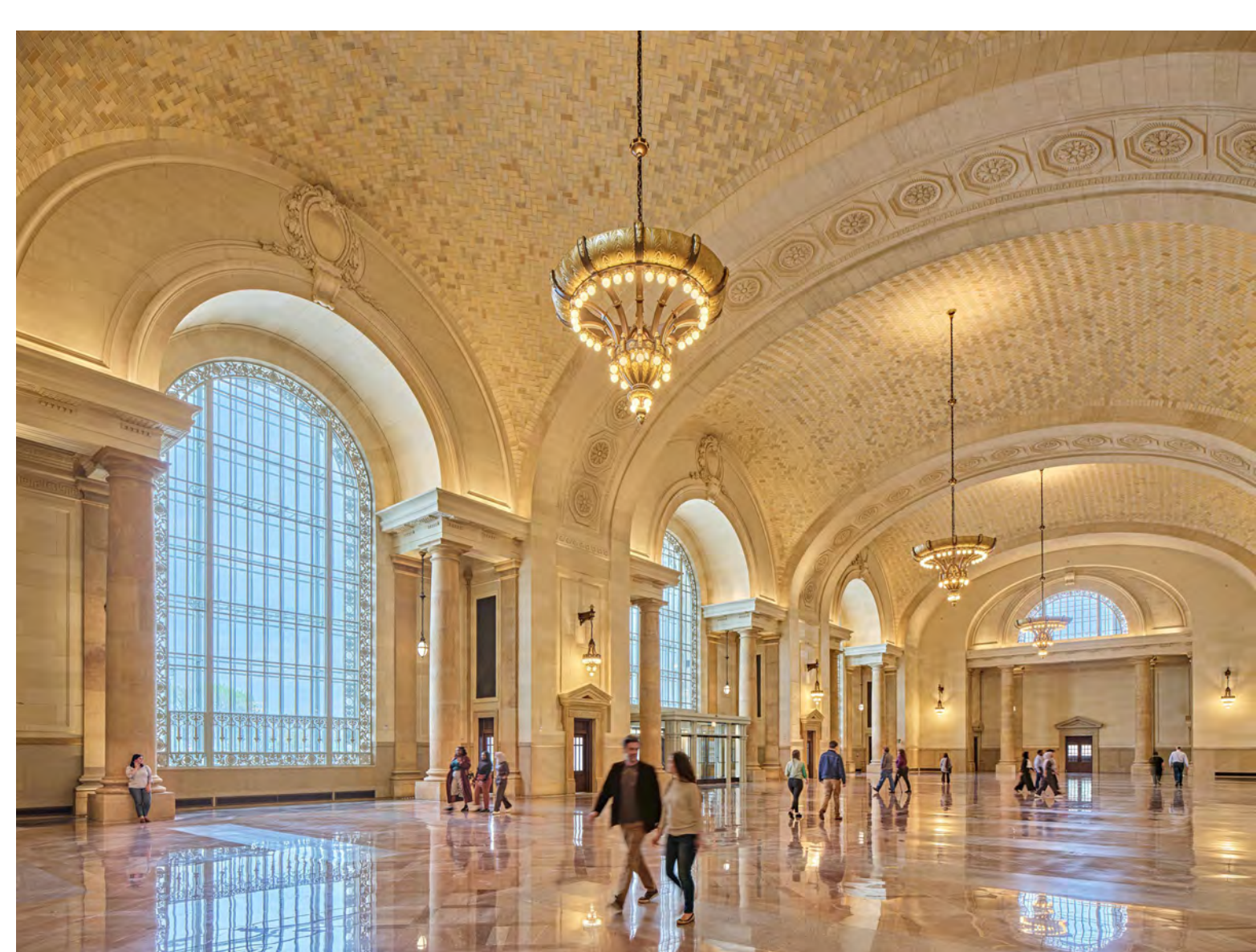
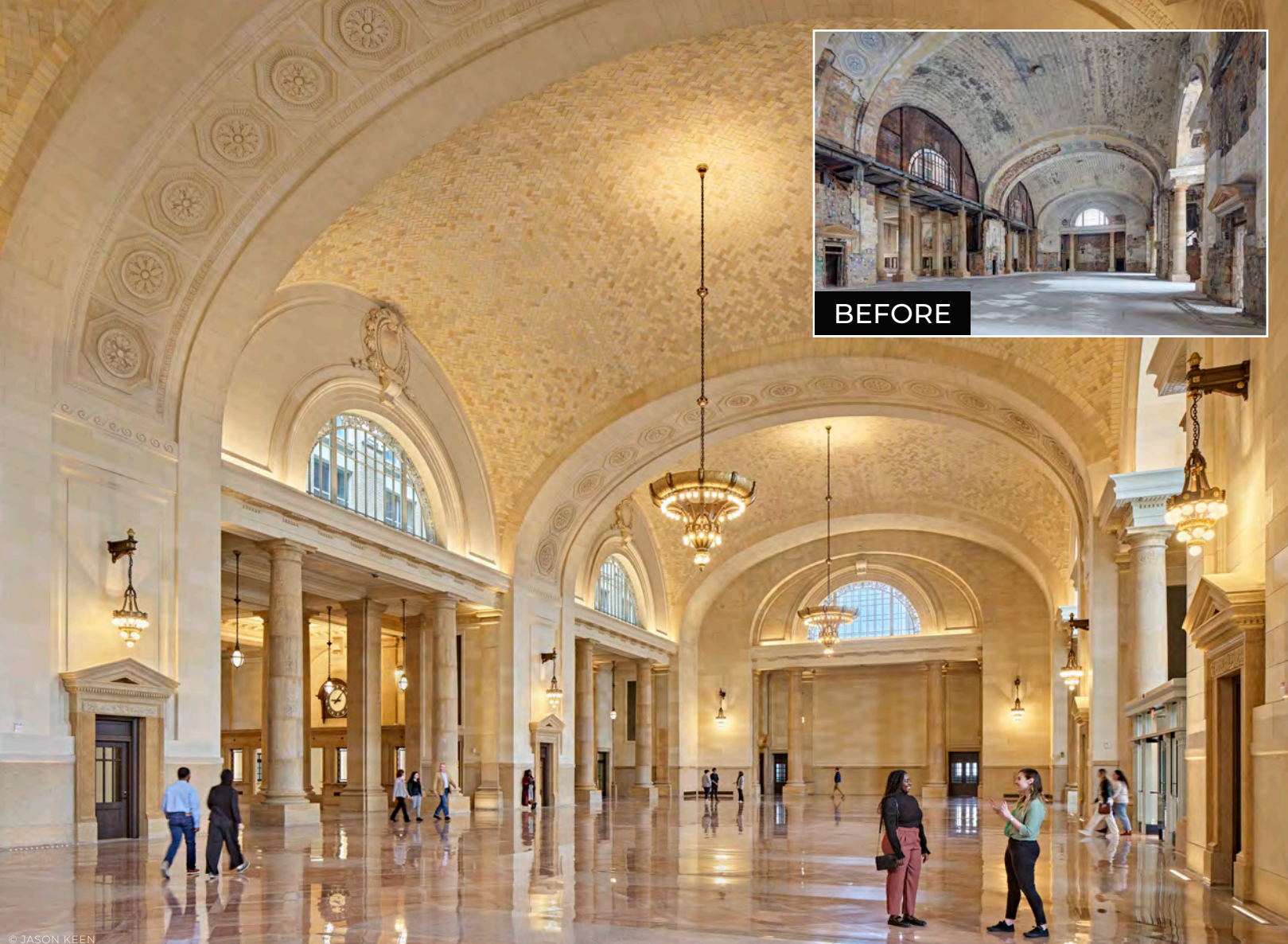
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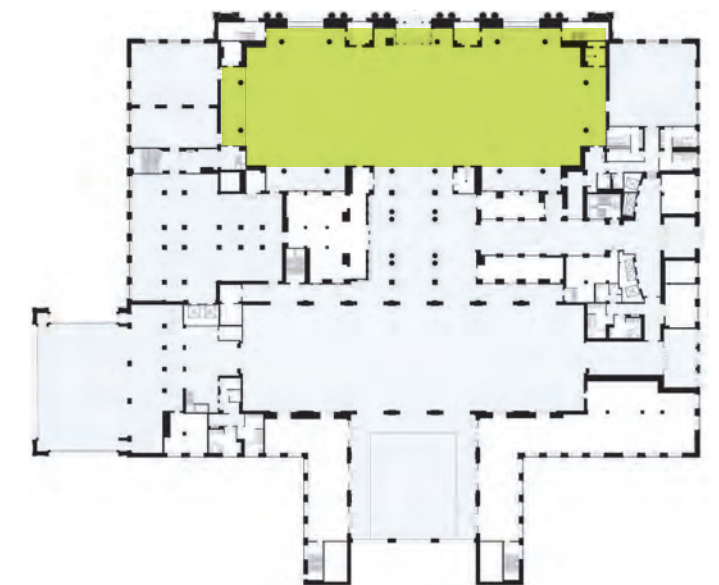
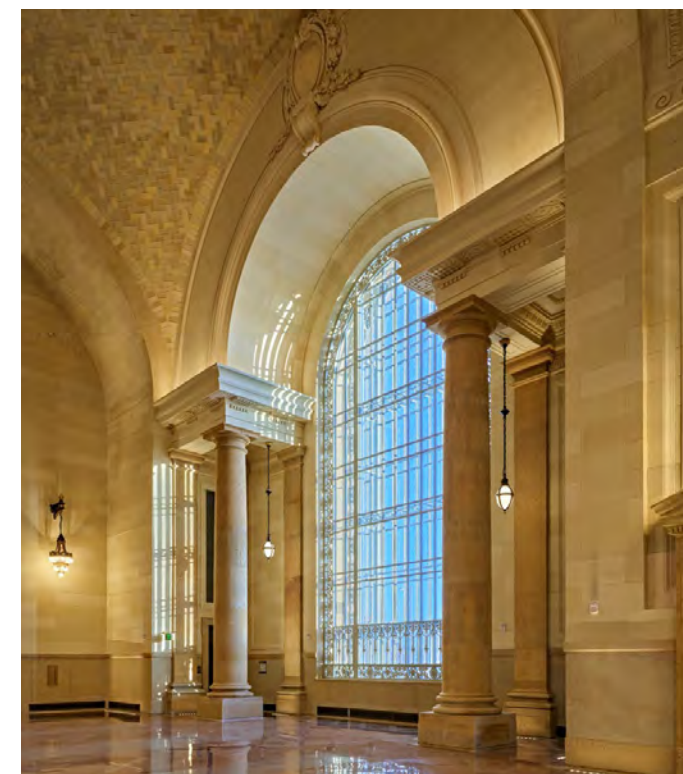




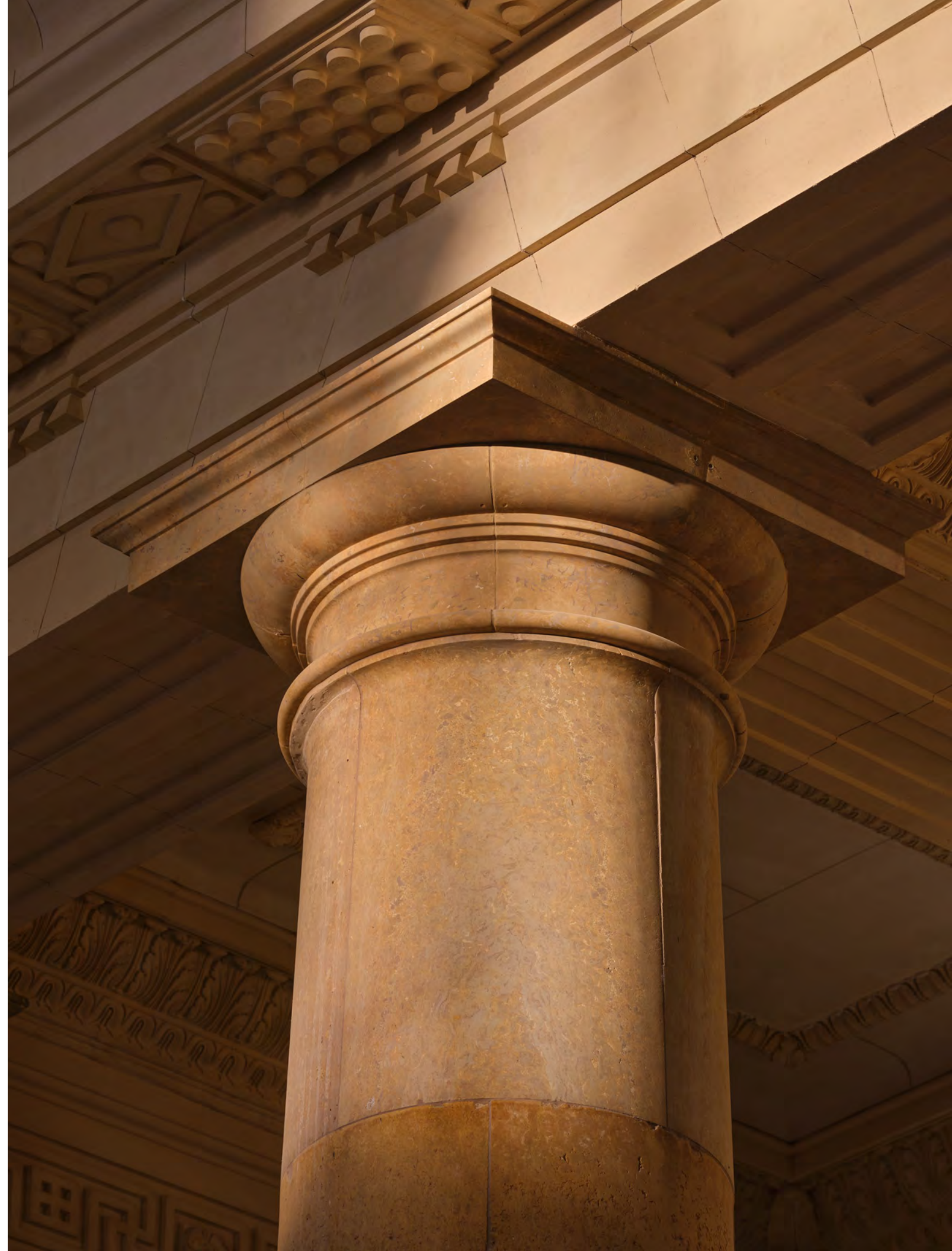
## GRAND HALL

The Grand Hall is the former waiting room where passengers would await their trains. It was originally filled with large wooden benches for seating.

- **Flooring:** The original marble floor has been restored and polished. Terrazzo infills mark the locations of the waiting benches. The divots in the floor around the bench outlines show where the marble was worn down by the shuffling feet of people sitting on the benches.
- **Cartouches & Medallions:** Eleven-foot-tall cartouches, or oval-shaped decorative seals, are set within six of the interior window arches. The cartouches, along with many of the floral medallions within the ceiling arches, were replicated.
- **Guastavino Tile:** The ornate ceiling in the Grand Hall (former Waiting Room) features a 21,000-square-foot Guastavino vaulted terra cotta tile system. The vaults are self-supporting and are comprised of layered tiles, varying from 22 tiles thick at the lower sections to only three tiles thick at the highest point (62 feet from the floor). There are 24,000 individual finish tiles, with 8,000 in each of the three bays. The renovation included extensive work to clean, repoint, or replace every finish tile.
- **Window Ornamentation:** Applying automotive technology, Ford was able to replicate the cast iron window ornamentation in the grand hall by scanning remaining fragments and 3D printing infill pieces. Look for decorative oak leaves and acorns, symbolizing strength and renewal.



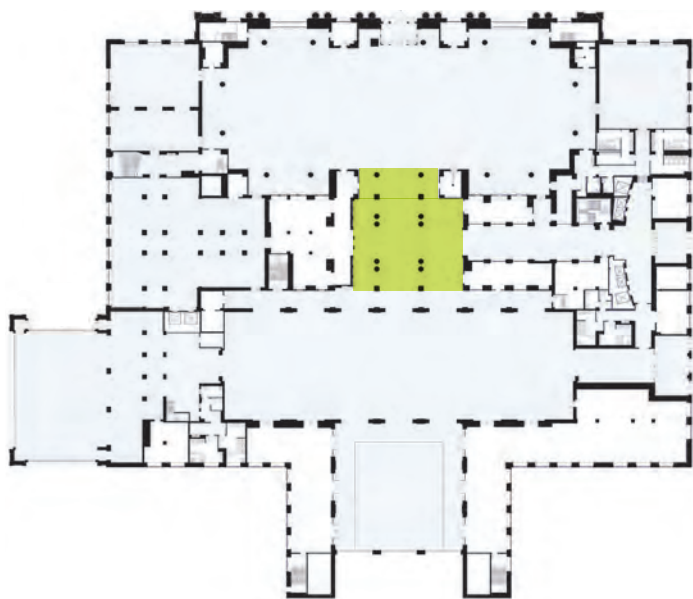
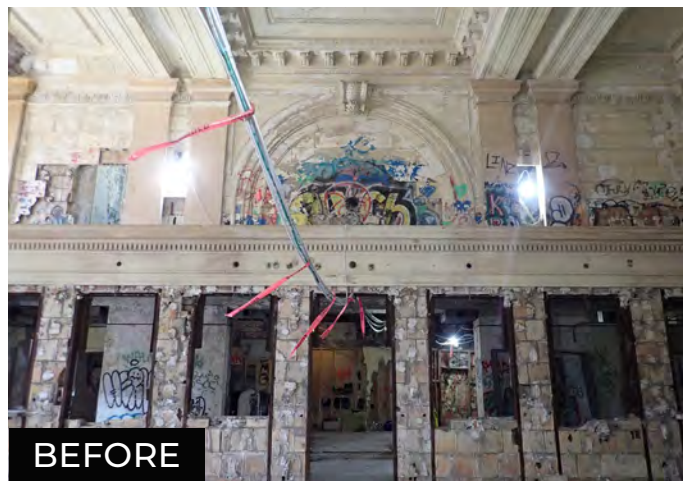






## TICKET LOBBY

- **Columns:** The columns in the ticket lobby are clad in Mankato stone. Their unique texture was created by exposure to the elements while the station was vacant and deteriorating.
- **Clock:** The historic clock was recreated with hand-carved wood elements and replicated cast iron decoration.
- **Lighting:** The chandeliers and sconces throughout the Ticket Lobby, as well as the Grand Hall, Arcade and East Elevator Lobby, were recreated using the historic shop drawings found at the state archives and various detail elements that were returned to the site.



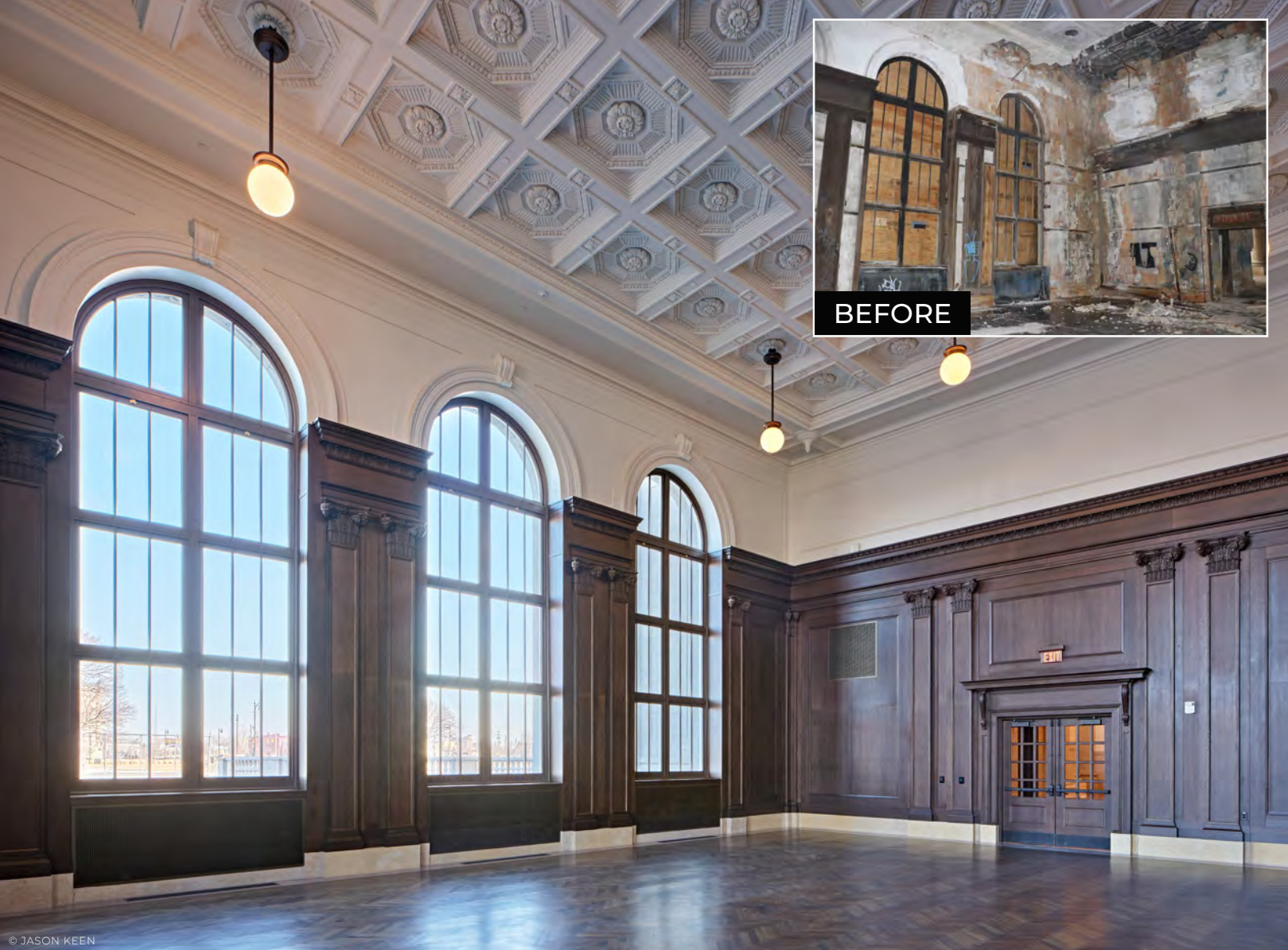


## ARCADE

- **Plasterwork:** Except for the stone base, the Arcade walls and ceiling are clad entirely in plaster made to look like stonework. Almost all of it is original—unlike the plasterwork elsewhere on the ground floor, it was protected from the elements by the tower structure above.
- **Storefronts:** The openings along the Arcade are the original cast iron storefront frames. One opening provides a passageway to the Grand Hall.







## READING ROOM

- **Ram's Head Capitals:** There are 44 ram's head capitals topping the pilasters. All had been missing, but one original was located which allowed for the replication of the rest of these unique capitals in the Reading Room and Tea Room.
- **Ceiling Rosettes:** Nearly all of the intricate rosettes that span the ceilings in the Tea and Reading Rooms went missing while the building was vacant. One rosette survived, which enabled conservationists to create a mold and replicate the other 66 rosettes.





# WOMEN'S WAITING ROOM

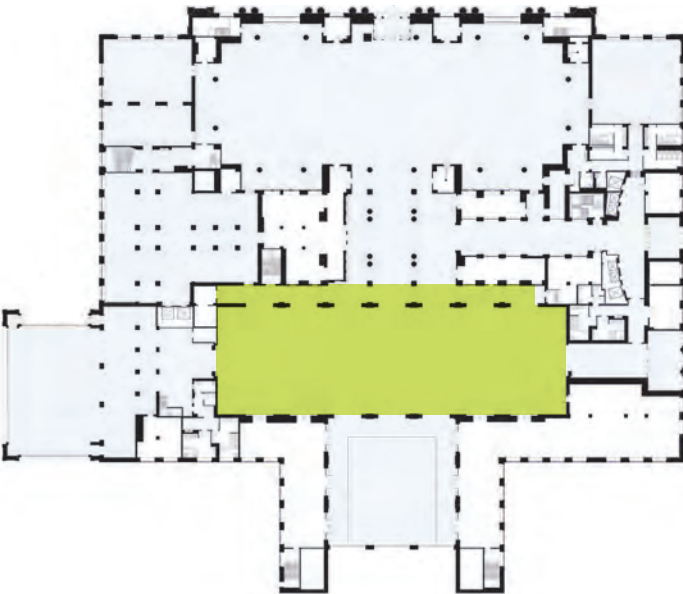
- **Flooring:** The original terrazzo cove and marble border were restored. The herringbone-pattern wood inlay was replicated.
- **Corbels:** One wooden corbel (the decorative element where the ceiling beams meet the upper wall), badly damaged by water infiltration from the low roof above, was used to recreate the other five, which were missing.





# CONCOURSE

- **Skylight:** The Concourse was historically capped with a laylight. After years of being open to the elements (in the “before” picture, the floor is covered in snow), the Concourse now features a skylight—keeping the roof truss system exposed, as it was when the building was vacant.
- **Original Elements:** All the brick and terracotta details in the Concourse, along with the cast iron spandrels, are original and were restored.
- **Flooring:** The original terrazzo floor had deteriorated beyond repair. Its replacement includes an in-floor radiant heating system.





# RESTAURANT

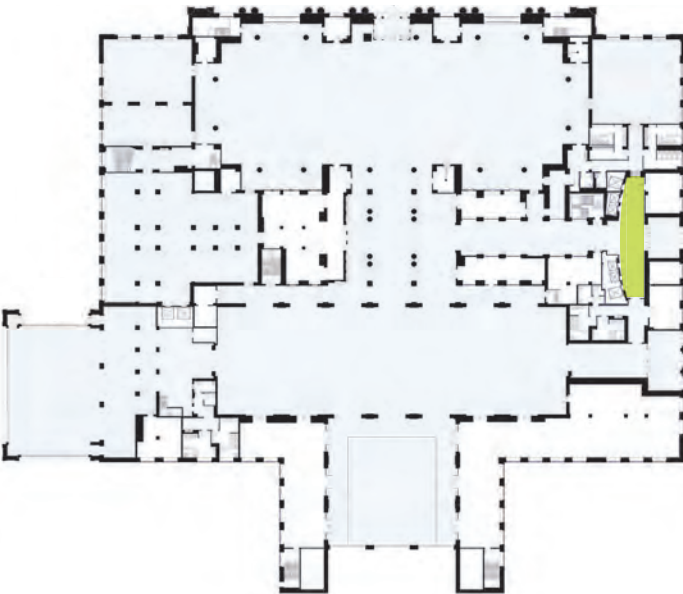
**Vaulting:** The original plaster vaults, which were textured to look like stone, were replicated.





# ELEVATOR LOBBY

- **Walls and Floor:** The Elevator Lobby is clad in Mankato stone and features a restored marble floor and plaster cornice.
- **Metal Elements:** The metal transoms and elevator door detailing reflect the original dial floor indicator and divided lite panels.









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